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# Viet Pacification Drive Is Shifting Southward

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SAIGON, Sept. 27—The emphasis in the pacification program in Vietnam is being shifted to the heavily populated areas around Saigon and the Mekong Delta, it was learned today.

A major policy decision taken by pacification chief Robert W. Komer will give priority in the beefed-up 1968 effort to the southern part of the country rather than the embattled northern provinces.

"The idea is to make the

main effort where the people are and where the security situation is such that pacification can actually take place," a senior U.S. official explained.

Furthermore, the U.S. mission now concedes that it drastically underestimated the size of the Vietcong "infrastructure," or political cadre embedded in hamlets and villages. This had previously been estimated at 39,000, but revised intelligence estimates place the political cadre now at about 75,000.

The decision by Komer and Gen. Nguyen Duc Thang, Vietnam's Pacification Minister, to concentrate on populated areas is a result of recommendations from advisers in the field.

They have long insisted that it was ineffective to place the 59-man Revolutionary Development (RD) teams in areas where they were in immediate danger of being overrun and wiped out.

This has been the case in certain areas in I Corps, which comprises the five northernmost provinces — where the North Vietnamese army has infiltrated in greatest strength.

U.S. officials say the pacification areas in which teams were placed in 1967 will not be abandoned. However, the massive buildups scheduled for 1968 will be in the III and IV Corps areas.

The number of hamlets in Vietnam is constantly being revised, partly through better statistical methods, partly because some hamlets are being abandoned, while others are just being discovered. Of the latter, nearly all are Vietcong controlled, officials say.

The current figure of operational hamlets is roughly 12,600. The U.S. mission rates each according to this scale:

(A) a friendly hamlet; (B) a pacified hamlet; (C) a hamlet where the security is such that elections can be held; (D and E) contested hamlets. The sixth rating is: Vietcong-controlled.

U.S. pacification advisers

A and B categories, with 3000 in the C category. This leaves 7500 hamlets considered contested or Vietcong-controlled.

[In July, Komer reported that the number of hamlets considered "secure" at the end of 1965 was 3900 and 4400 at

the end of 1966. He had said enemy strength in the hamlets was not "constantly increasing," but had "practically leveled off" over the preceding six months.]

Many of the hamlets in the A and B categories are the most populous in the country, U.S. advisers say, thus some 68 per cent of the 17 million population lives in the cities or in hamlets which have a C rating or above.

Currently, some 550 RD teams are operating in about 1100 hamlets trying to bring them under full government control.

The bulk of the 65,000 additional Vietnamese government troops to be raised in 1968 are scheduled to go into the pacification effort, informed sources indicated, and these will enter areas where the military already has the upper hand.

"The RD teams are not the whole of the pacification program," said a U.S. official. "It is indispensable to do a better job against the Vietcong infrastructure. This is hardest of all."

The U.S. mission hopes to build up the Vietnamese National Police from 68,000 men to 74,000 men at the end of 1967, and 95,000 men by the end of 1968. U.S. advisers say the totals will fall somewhat short of the goals.

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